As regards the visit of the President of the Kazakhstan Republic, as far as we are aware, no trade protocol has been signed. Only discussions have taken place with the President. The protocol has been signed only with the Russian Federation. The value of oil products—I am sorry, I would like to correct—will be quoted in dollars but payment will be made in rupees as per the exchange rate. This is the practice which was being followed earlier also.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Sir, all the hon. Members have expressed concern about the outgo of foreign exchange. We are not having enough oil because our exploration has not reached the desired level. The hon. Minister also answered just now that all efforts are being made. May I know from the hon. Minister whether the ONGC has made specific proposals even in December 1990 about it? They have written to the Minister about it several months back. They have made several proposals to move in this direction but the Ministry has not taken any decision. Is it a fact that the ONGC has made concreteproposals months back and if so, what action as of today, has been taken by the Government to enable oil generation—hydro carbon procurement—from our own off- shore and on-shore through the ONGC and other sources? What action is being taken on those proposals?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : Sir, a large number of mega projects in the Bombay off-shore such as Neelam, mukta and Panna have either already been sanctioned or are already in the process of sanction by the Central Government. When these projects go on strem, there will be an additionality in production. In addition, we have thrown open the filld of exploration to risk capital by Indian and foreign companies and as per the decision of the Government, 72 blocks—33 on-shore and 39 off-shore have been projected for bidding by national and internat ional oil exploration companies. The response is encouraging. The final date for the bid is 15th of April. As a result of the projects on the anvil, as a result of the new exploratory effort and as a result of the in-house exercises being made by the ONGC to enhance the oil recovery from the existing wells, consistent with thethe long-term health of the wells, we are maximising our efforts to increase oil production in this country.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: I would like to know whether all the ONGC's proposals are being examined by the Ministry or not. You say yes or no.

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: The ONGC has made several proposals. I am sure, the hon. Member is referring to the Das Gupta Committee's report. Which alternative is to be selected by the Government is under the examination of the Governm ent. But in the mean-while, it is not necessary that the Government give day-to-day directions to the ONGC. They are technical and professional body, a competent body. They are doing their best to enhance the production.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: But the matters are lying with the Ministry for a decision. That is why they can't function. What are you doing about that?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: We are examining various alternatives.

SHRI B. SHANKA ANAND: May I make a submission, Sir? The hon. Member is right. He has written to us suggesting many proposals to be examined by us and his suggestions are under consideration.

KUMARI CHANDRIKA PREMJI KENIA: Sir, the oil imports for the year 1990-91 amounted to Rs. 10,500 crores out of the total import bill of Rs. 40,000 crores and as was admitted by the hon. Minister just now, the current year's import bill will amount to Rs. 12,000 crores to Rs. 13,000 crores. Sir, I feel the crucial factor which determines the total foreign exchange outgo will be the demand-management of the petroleum products. The Planning Commission Working Group on Petroleum itself has suggested that there will be a total demand of 62 million tonnes in the current year which will amount to a growth rate of 12 per cent. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what steps or what effective measures the Government will take to curb the demand for the petroleum products.

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: Sir, demand management of petroleum products is one of the main responsibilities of this Ministry. We have a programme for conservation of petroleum products. Oil Conservation Week was observed only this month. There is a regular programme for oil conservation. In demand management, one silver lining in the cloud is that the demand in 1991-92 has been less than what was predicted earlier. Demand management spreads across oil pricing, allocation, conservtion and so on and we implement this comprehensive programme.

Talks with ULFA

*23. SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: †

SHRI RAJ MOHAN GANDHI:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is Government's stand in respect of the ULFA;

†The question was actually asked on floor of the House by Shrimati Bijoya Chakravarty.

(b) whether Government propose to hold tripartite talks involving the Central Government. Assam Government and all the sections of the ULFA;

(c) whether the representatives of BODOS, KARBIS and other tribal of Assam are also proposed to be associated with the talks; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI M.M. JACOB): (a) The Government believes in resolution of problems through discussions provided that the aggrieved persons or groups accept the Constitution of India, give-up violence, come over ground and live as peaceful citizens of a democratic country. The Government has the same stand in respect of ULFA also. Some leaders of ULFA have given assurance to accept and seek solution to their problems within the Constitution of India, give-up violence and deposit arms after ratification of their decision by the General Council of the ULFA.

(b) to (d) These questions do not arise at this stage as the ratification of the decisions by the General Council of the ULFA has not been received.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: Sir, the entire answer given by the hon. Minister is very cryptic and vague; it is so because the ULFA people are ready to talk within the framework of the Constitution and shun violence. They have also declared a unilateral ceasefire and that is known to the Minister. The Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Hiteshwar Saikia, many a time issued statements regarding the date of the proposed talks with ULFA. So the answer given by the hon. Minister has some contradiction and I don't know whether there is any coordination between the Chief Minister of Assam and the Home Minister. So, I want to put the question-considering the fact that ULFA is an organisation about which there is no doubt and it is more a symptom of the discontentment—(a) to achieve success whether the Government has formulated a broad-based policy identifying the issues; (b) whether the Government can bring representatives of all the ULFA cadres to the table and (c) whether the Home Minister will go to the root of the discontentment which has created ULFA-like extremism in Assam.

SHRI M. M. JACOB: Sir, the hon. Member actually knows very well the involvement of the Government of India at the earlier stage even in arriving at the Assam Accord to look into the problems of Assam identifying their real problems and that all the items are attended to, but at the moment the real situation is that we are waiting for the General Council of ULFA to come and say finally what the decision taken by them is. On a casual hearing we may not be able to negotiate finally. So we want to know fully and certainly whether they are prepared to work within the Constitution and come with any sort of grievances. Then we are prepared to sit with anyone and there is absolute coordination between the State Government of Assam and the Government of India in this matter.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: Sir, till now ULFA is a banned organisation, but I don't know how the Chief Minister of Assam has issued a statement regarding the date of the proposed talks with ULFA. So I want to know from the hon. Minister whether in order to facilitate the ULFA cadres for holding free discussion in their General Body the Government proposes to withdraw the ban imposed on the ULFA.

SHRI M.M. JACOB: Sir, I understand that the Chief Minister of Assam has said that all those people who wanted to come and have discussion were free to come and have discussion.

SHRI RAJ MOHAN GANDHI: Mr. Chairman, will the hon. Minister tell us whether the Government has conveyed through its channels to the ULFA people that in any discussions or agreement that may be reached, the Government will give sufficient weight to the deep feeling in many people of Assam that they have been neglected, that Delhi is far and Delhi can be neglectful and forgetful and that federalism will be truly 'practised and regional identities and aspirations will be truly respected? That is part (a) of my question. Part (b) of my question is this. The Minister says that the question of associating with the Karbis and Bodos will be taken up at a later stage. Is the Government aware that unless the Bodos and the Karbis are also involved at some stage no agreement with ULFA can be lasting for Assam? Is the Government aware of this reality?

SHRI M. M. JACOB: Sir, with regard to the first part of the question, we certainly respect the identity and aspirations of the people of Assam and with this in mind we were holding preliminary negotiations at every stage, but not with the ULFA because the State Government is directly invoved at the moment. But at a later stage

if the ULFA, as I mentioned earlier, accepts the proposal and the State Government suggests, we are glad to hold a tripartite talk. But regarding the second aspect of the question relating to Bodos and Karbi Anglongs it is a different question. The other is total development of Assam. That is a different subject. For the development of Assam we are prepared to talk with the Bodos and Karbis and other tribes which are existing there for a final settlement.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I congratulate the Government for this welcome development in Assam. Members from the State of Assam feel that normalcy is slowly coming to the State and this is due to the measures taken by the Central Government as well as the State Government. The hon. Member has said that there was some difference of opinions; I don't think that there can be any difference of opinion because it is the State Government who is the implementing authority in the State. So, I know that there is complete unanimity in the use of force between the Central Government and the State Government and the people of Assam are feeling that normalcy is slowly coming and it would be a long-lasting normalcy. Therefore, frequent dates have been mentioned for holding talks. I feel that we should not rush through the talks. We should consider all the aspects and have preliminary talks with them and after that only we can have a formal talk---whether it is a tripartite talk or a bipartite talk. After a complete understanding the talks should be held. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether some preliminary talks are going on to come to the main issue. That is all I want to know from the hon. Minister.

SHRI M. M. JACOB : In fact, it is a suggestion to the Government. We have noted it and we will certainly wait for the outcome of the preliminary discussion.

DR. NAGEN SAIKIA : Sir, I welcome the effort of the Government to hold talks with the militants of Assam. I hope that they will be able to arrive at a solution. At the same time I want to know from the hon. Minister whether to create a congenial atmosphere in the State for holding talks, the Government is going to withdraw the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Disturbed Areas Act from the State. I also want to know whether some dates have been fixed for talks.

SHRI M. M. JACOB : Sir, as soon as normalcy is achieved in Assam the Government of India will certainly withdraw the armed forces. At the moment, Sir, talk is under progress. It is not a time for withdrawing armed forces from Assam. To ensure security and safety of the innocent people of Assam the presence of armed forces is necessary.

PROF. SAURIN BHATTACHARYA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the same thing is being repeated by the Home Minister in reply to various quesions. This is a very delicate situation through which Assam is passing. Apparently, there is some amount of peace there. But perhaps it may be an appearance as deceptive as it is said. So, it may also be deceptive. Therefore, not ponderous action but swift action is necessary to meet the situation which has continued for a long time to the detriment of the national interest.

My question is perhaps somewhat repetitive. I want to know whether the Government of India has received any official communication at the end of the Council meeting of the ULFA to the effect that they are ready for discussion without any pre-condition or within the framework of the Constitution of India abjuring violence. But the essential point is to restore peace in Assam as a whole. Therefore, the problem of Bodos and Karbis cannot be altogether isolated. If joint meeting is not possible, will simultaneous discussion with them to arrive at a peaceful solution of their aspriations also be made by the Government of India at its own initiative ?

SHRI M. M. JACOB : Regarding his first part of the question, the Government is hoping that the General Council of the ULFA will certainly expedite the decision and communicate to us. We are awaiting it at any moment. So far we have not got the decision of the General Council of the ULFA. Regarding the second part of his question whether there is any other negotiation going on, yes, Sir, we had a tripartite discussion with the Assam Government, Bodo representatives and the Home Ministry. I myself was present in the discussion. We have achieved a lot of things by the discussion. But we are waiting for further discussion. We had informal discussion with Karbis also. Sir two committees have been appointed. A three-members Committee for Bodos to suggest to us the items to be attended to by the Government of India. For Karbis a two-member committee has been appointed to examine the aspirations, difficulties and problems. The Committee submitted the report to C.M., Assam, who has sent it to Govt. of India. We are awaiting the report of Bodo committee. We have given 31st March as the deadline to the committee for Bodos to give us the report. We are waiting for the report of the committee.